

H-Net Reviews

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Morten G. Ender, ed. *Military Brats and Other Global Nomads: Growing Up in Organization Families*. Westport and London: Praeger, 2002. xxxi + 266 pp. Tables, notes, bibliographical references, index. \$64.95 (cloth), ISBN 0-275-97266-6.

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Growing Up as a Global Nomad

There are forty thousand Americans in Saudi Arabia as of the latest count. How many of them are children growing up so far from Kansas? How many children who grow up as military brats, as they like to call themselves, have mixed reactions to their parents' life choices? Is it a good thing or not so good? Morten Ender, who grew up himself as a military brat and is now Associate Professor of Sociology at West Point, set out to gather the latest studies and recommendations about the children who spend part of their childhood and adolescence in a place different from their "passport country." Since World War II, American political, military, corporate, and humanitarian responsibilities abroad have expanded exponentially. Increasing numbers of government officials, educators, military personnel, business executives and missionaries began to travel and live outside of their home country for varying lengths of time and many brought their families. Earlier sociological works concentrated on the clinical studies of children who evidenced negative results to such a life but by enlarging the pool of children, and now grown adults, the conclusions are that it varies. Some loved it, some are still processing their feelings, some had real trouble adjusting. Many enjoy the camaraderie of reunions with other military brats who feel that their experiences are special.

Now that military women are being deployed and leaving little kids behind, the first chapter, "The Effects of Deployment," deals extensively with the attachment problems that ensue. Separations are particularly difficult for small children; thus, the analysis and suggestions for support services as well as checklists for military members and the chosen caregiver are perhaps the most useful chapter in this book for military women on active duty. "The military force must increasingly rely on women, thus, comprehensive family programs that recognize

changes in military families, ... and improving policies regarding childcare are necessary to maintain combat readiness and to continue to recruit and retain highly skilled military personnel" (p. 18).

This book is prescriptive as well as descriptive and will be very useful for all professionals who deal with the global nomad families and children. It also might help parents to monitor the developmental course of their children. This reviewer had a few moments of recognition: so that is what was going on with T; yes, L did have some learning experiences he would not have experienced had he been home in California. I wish I had known earlier which attitudes and actions might pass in time and which might need some intervention. The writing is clean and concise, and the professional vocabulary and acronyms nicely explained. For example a TCK is a Third Culture Kid, a MK is a Missionary Kid, and so on. As a teacher, I could have used some of the insights expressed in this book as we waited out the adjustment period for the newly returning military brat or the bewildered third culture immigrant child who turn up regularly in our local schools.

How does the experience of growing up in a different country impact the educational and occupational choices of the adult lives of third culture children? We can all see Tiger Woods as a poster boy for the military brat who enjoyed the advantages of the structured life on bases abroad and metaphorically ran with them, but there are also personal instances of children of friends who still mope and pine because their heart is still in Africa or Spain; the other country still feels like home to them.

Since it is not likely that there will be fewer global nomads among our population in the future, or around the world for that matter, there is room for even more research into the problems and

advantages of this lifestyle. How to help those who need it, how we can fit positive aspects of nomadic growing up into our perception of an increasingly global world are still open questions, but Dr. Ender and his contributors have made an excellent start and this is a book that "rings true," with many, many useful things to say.

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- Children of alien laborers.
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